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How-To: Removing Shifter Cables (with Pictures)

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11-12-2010, 01:16 PM

#1

ShawnV
Master Member

Join Date: Aug 2007
Location: Greensboro, NC
Posts: 2,680
[ShawnV's Photos](#) 
2000 SW2

How-To: Removing Shifter Cables (with Pictures)

Here is a how-to for replacing your shifter cables on a saturn S-series. The shifter cable eyelet/bushing is a known weak point on our cars.

First remove the breather tube from the air box so you can find where the shifter cables attach to the transmission. These are located below and behind the EGR valve.

Sorry.
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There are two clips that hold the cable eyelet onto the transmission and can be removed by pulling up on the clip then sliding it off its post.

Sorry.
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Remove the clips that hold the shifter cables to the transmission by grabbing them with pliers or prying them up with a screwdriver.

Sorry.
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Sorry.
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Here is what the clips look like once removed:

Sorry.

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 photobucket

Next go inside the car and remove both kick panels on either side of the dash.

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 photobucket

Remove the Phillips screw on either side that holds the center console in, and then remove the screws that hold the rear of the console in. This example is of a 3rd generation, so there are two screws near the rear floor on either side. For 2nd gens, there are two horizontal screws inside the console box.

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Remove the power window switch if equipped, and raise the rear of the console. Once you get enough clearance at the front, you'll need to unplug the cig lighter. Here's a picture of the 3rd gen; richpin has a video on the 2nd gen cig lighter.

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Remove the center console completely:

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Remove the 10mm bolt holding the shifter cables, and then remove the four 13mm bolts holding the shifter itself on. There are three plastic clips holding wiring to the shifter – remove these.

Shove a couple of flat head screw drivers under the white connector and pry it off.

Sorry.

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 photobucket

[From FSM] Use slip-joint pliers to grasp the black connector and pry it away from its ball socket.

Sorry.

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 photobucket

Carefully pull up on the shifter and remove the black clip at the front of the metal housing.

Sorry.

This Image Is currently
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Now the cables are free and you can completely remove the shifter to get it out of the way. This makes it easier to pull the cables through the firewall.

The cables run along under the center of the heater core to the firewall. There is a crease in the carpet here, so pull the carpet aside.



Next jack up the car high and securely on jack stands. Walk around the car and give it some pushes to make sure it won't fall off your stands.

Crawl under the car and find the loose shifter cables. Pull them out from the engine tangle until they hang free.

Follow the cables to the firewall and a rectangular grommet.



Shove your two long flat head screwdrivers in there and work the grommet out.



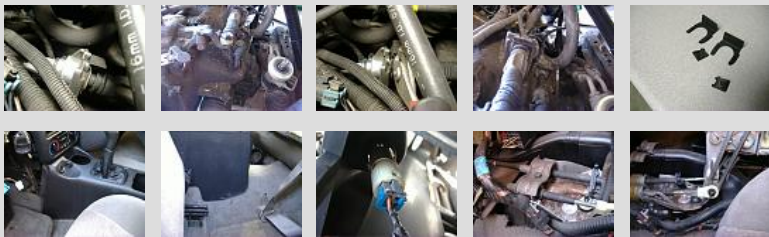
Once the grommet is loose you can remove the cables either by pulling them out from the engine bay or from the inside. I've done it both ways and find the engine bay side easier. You'll need to pull one shifter cable out at a time, since the hole is not large enough for both to pass through at once.

Installation is the reverse: feed the shifter cable through the firewall, install the grommet, install the cables to the shifter and to the tranny. Attaching the eyelets to the shifter requires a pair of pliers carefully applying pressure to the ball and socket.

The tools I needed for this repair were: 2 flat heads, pliers, 10 and 13mm socket, phillips screwdriver, ratchet and extension.

Some notes:
This repair took me about 30 mins my first time doing it (in a real car).
Shifter cables can be had at the dealership for ~\$200 or junkyard for ~\$10. I keep a few on hand. Any Saturn S-series cable will work. OEM cables from the auto parts store are not recommended.

Attached Thumbnails



REWARD EXCELLENCE!

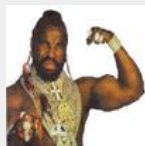
Rate the quality of this post and help ShawnV reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

11-12-2010, 05:03 PM

#2

DJboozeAlot

Advanced Member



Join Date: Jul 2002
Location: Midwest
Posts: 693

[DJboozeAlot's Photos](#)

1996 SC2

**Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures**

great write up. i've had several saturns with a broken bushing and have never actually replaced the cables, i used one of those motormite windshield washer bushings that someone here suggested (can't remember the part number but you could find it in a search), and that was a real PITA.

what i have been doing for the last few years when i get a broken bushing is remove the whole shift tower (whatever you want to call it) in the center console and drill out the metal part where the bushing goes and put a bolt through the hole. put a hollow metal sleeve around the bolt so the bolt can rotate freely inside the sleeve. put the end of the shifter cable over the metal sleeve. put washers on each end and put some loctite and a nut on the end of the bolt and you have a free moving fix made of steel that will NEVER break again. i had taken some pictures of this and fully intended on doing a write up at one point but never did.

...

Awesome Backpacking Videos - <https://www.youtube.com/user/MetalBackpacker>
Detroit Ghetto Documentary - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nfxmshUEvbg>

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

Rate the quality of this post and help [DJboozeAlot](#) reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!



11-13-2010, 11:06 AM

#3

alordofchaos

Super Member



Join Date: Jan 2009
Location: Central MI
Posts: 12,837

[alordofchaos's Photos](#)

2002 SC2
1998 SL2

**Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures**

Excellent writeup, as always 😊

Can't wait to find a manual trans s-series in the JY- local one is full of automatics. It looks like on those large clips, it is just spring tension and gravity holding it in?

Would it be worth pulling the large clips and spreading out those "tabs" or legs in the back slightly to increase the spring tension?

some pictures of the 2nd gen console removal here:
<http://www.saturnfans.com/forums/sho...hlight=bushing>

...

I'm not worthy to grovel in the shadow of Signmaster's wisdom

11/2016 red 2002 5 spd SC2 151k DD
7/2010 Craigslist white 1997 SC2 project
12/2008 eBay silver 1998 SL2 5 spd 102k, now 201k+ miles

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

Rate the quality of this post and help [alordofchaos](#) reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!



11-13-2010, 11:43 AM

#4

ShawnV

Master Member



Join Date: Aug 2007
Location: Greensboro, NC
Posts: 2,680

[ShawnV's Photos](#)

2000 SW2

**Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures**

Quote:

Originally Posted by [alordofchaos](#)

Would it be worth pulling the large clips and spreading out those "tabs" or legs in the back slightly to increase the spring tension?

some pictures of the 2nd gen console removal here:
<http://www.saturnfans.com/forums/sho...hlight=bushing>

I don't think it would be worth spreading them. Wait until you have to take those clips out - they can be a huge pain.

And thanks for the 2nd gen pics. The rest is identical, so that's what I was missing!

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

Rate the quality of this post and help [ShawnV](#) reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!



11-13-2010, 12:18 PM

#5

OldNuc

Super Member

Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures

Join Date: Apr 2008
Location: Far Southwestern Iowa
Posts: 66,693

[OldNuc's Photos](#)

1998 SC2

Do not spread them. That is not what holds them in place. They have a front and a back. When properly installed the cable sheath is held into a socket on the back, entry, side of the trans and the spring tension of the clip holds the cable sheath into the socket. there is no motion unless the clip was never inserted all the way into the grove. Installing the clip all the way down into the grove is difficult as you can not see when it is full down. If it is not full down the housing will tilt in the socket and walk the clip out onto the ground. The tab must point left. You can drill a hole in the tab and slip a wire around the inside portion of the sheath and then one end through the hole and then twist lightly.

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

Rate the quality of this post and help *OldNuc* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

quote

11-14-2010, 09:52 AM

#6

2NDSOUT

Master Member



Join Date: Sep 2000
Location: Cincinnati, Ohio
Posts: 7,318

[2NDSOUT's Photos](#)

1994 SL2
1999 SL

Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures

It would be good to note for earlier model year S-Series... first generation... that the grommet that holds the shifter cables in the firewall, is secured with a couple of 10mm bolts.

The second generation grommet was a pop out only type grommet that can be removed with a flathead screwdriver.

...

Bryan

94SL2 HCE, "Pearl"

99 SL

94SL2 260K Miles
1/15

97SW2 266K Miles
2/15

Always

94SC1 340,501 Miles
Org. Engine/Auto Trans
2/97-10/08
Gone 3/12

92SL1
05VUE
91SC

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

Rate the quality of this post and help *2NDSOUT* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

quote

11-14-2010, 11:04 AM

#7

OldNuc

Super Member

Join Date: Apr 2008
Location: Far Southwestern Iowa
Posts: 66,693

[OldNuc's Photos](#)

1998 SC2

Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures

The cables with the 10mm bolts are the OEM replacements. They all were originally installed with the grommet.

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

Rate the quality of this post and help *OldNuc* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

quote

11-14-2010, 11:29 AM

#8

ShawnV

Master Member



Join Date: Aug 2007
Location: Greensboro, NC
Posts: 2,680

[ShawnV's Photos](#)

2000 SW2

Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures

Quote:

Originally Posted by **OldNuc**
The cables with the 10mm bolts are the OEM replacements. They all were originally installed with the grommet.

Do you mean OEM as in dealership or aftermarket "OEM?"

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

Rate the quality of this post and help *ShawnV* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

quote

11-14-2010, 12:06 PM

#9

OldNuc

Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures

www.saturnfans.com/forums/showthread.php?t=160664

5/9

Super Member Join Date: Apr 2008 Location: Far Southwestern Iowa Posts: 66,693 OldNuc's Photos 1998 SC2	Official OEM Saturn replacement part. The El-Cheapo aftermarket set is built the same way. It is how you tell when you have replacement cables. And if they work properly they are Saturn replacements. The high tech robotic assembly was not capable of holding a cable set with a plate and studs against the inside of the firewall and then placing a retaining plate over the studs on the other side and adding 2 nuts. Keep in mind you have to thread the cables through that outer retainer plate also. So, they developed the pop-in grommet. Keep in mind the fine job they did on intake gaskets. REWARD EXCELLENCE! Rate the quality of this post and help <i>OldNuc</i> reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!
11-14-2010, 12:14 PM #10	
ShawnV Master Member Join Date: Aug 2007 Location: Greensboro, NC Posts: 2,680 ShawnV's Photos 2000 SW2	Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures The only set I've replaced was held in with the bolts, and were completely frayed at the tranny side. The car was of course undriveable, but easily fixed. I have four or five sets of cables sitting in the garage, and all must be originals because they are the grommet-only style. There's a 97 sw2 about an hour from me that's been on CL for months with a broken shifter cable. The car is green with leather, but has 210k on it. I've resisted going down to look at it. REWARD EXCELLENCE! Rate the quality of this post and help <i>ShawnV</i> reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!
11-14-2010, 12:19 PM #11	
OldNuc Super Member Join Date: Apr 2008 Location: Far Southwestern Iowa Posts: 66,693 OldNuc's Photos 1998 SC2	Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures 2 nd Gen cars are easier to work on. The cables will fit. A stick shift wagon is a prime candidate for an engine overhaul. That is much easier on a gen-2 engine also.... REWARD EXCELLENCE! Rate the quality of this post and help <i>OldNuc</i> reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!
11-14-2010, 12:29 PM #12	
ShawnV Master Member Join Date: Aug 2007 Location: Greensboro, NC Posts: 2,680 ShawnV's Photos 2000 SW2	Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures Quote: Originally Posted by OldNuc <i>2 nd Gen cars are easier to work on. The cables will fit. A stick shift wagon is a prime candidate for an engine overhaul. That is much easier on a gen-2 engine also....</i> Oh, I guess I forgot to mention he wants \$1000 firm on it REWARD EXCELLENCE! Rate the quality of this post and help <i>ShawnV</i> reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!
11-14-2010, 01:18 PM #13	
OldNuc Super Member Join Date: Apr 2008 Location: Far Southwestern Iowa Posts: 66,693 OldNuc's Photos 1998 SC2	Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures The only thing "firm" is the concrete in his head. ID-10-T REWARD EXCELLENCE! Rate the quality of this post and help <i>OldNuc</i> reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!
09-12-2011, 10:26 PM #14	
perrypainter New Member Join Date: Sep 2011 Posts: 1	THANK-YOU so damn much! I seriously just registered with this site ONLY because I wanted to thank ShawnV for his absolutely amazing how-to! This is the best how to instructions i have ever found for anything, let alone auto-repair. Pics were clear and explained clearly. Absolutely saved my a&&. A couple of things that were a real pain in the butt was the gromet for the firewall was reallllly hard to get out. And the

wire harness for the window controls in the center console were extremely annoying and hard to get undone.

You have done a great service, so thank you.

I don't know if you vote for stickies here, but this definitely deserves consideration.

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

 Rate the quality of this post and help *perrypainter* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

09-13-2011, 09:20 AM #15

alordofchaos
Super Member

Join Date: Jan 2009
Location: Central MI
Posts: 12,837
[alordofchaos's Photos](#) 

Re: THANK-YOU so damn much!

Welcome to saturnfans 😊

Quote:
Originally Posted by **perrypainter** 
I seriously just registered with this site ONLY because I wanted to thank ShawnV for his absolutely amazing how-to! .

The [How To Library](#) and [richpin videos](#) will knock your socks off 🇺🇸

Find more of ShawnV's excellent work in the How to Library as well

...

I'm not worthy to grovel in the shadow of Signmaster's wisdom

11/2016 red 2002 5 spd SC2 151k DD
7/2010 Craigslist white 1997 SC2 project
12/2008 eBay silver 1998 SL2 5 spd 102k, now 201k+ miles

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

 Rate the quality of this post and help *alordofchaos* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

04-30-2012, 05:26 PM #16

Spaghettiohead
Advanced Member

Join Date: Mar 2012
Location: Kingsville, TX
Posts: 502
1999 SC2

Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures

Looking to replace my shifter cables as the boots are torn to hell...and the AutoZone aftermarkets are ridiculously enticing at \$65. Why do y'all recommend only OEM?

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

 Rate the quality of this post and help *Spaghettiohead* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

05-01-2012, 07:35 PM #17

Spaghettiohead
Advanced Member

Join Date: Mar 2012
Location: Kingsville, TX
Posts: 502
1999 SC2

Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures

::bump::

Why aren't aftermarket shifter cables highly regarded? At \$65 as opposed to \$200 plus, they are tempting...

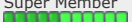
REWARD EXCELLENCE!

 Rate the quality of this post and help *Spaghettiohead* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

05-01-2012, 08:39 PM #18

OldNuc
Super Member

Join Date: Apr 2008
Location: Far Southwestern Iowa
Posts: 66,693
[OldNuc's Photos](#) 

Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures

Buy a set of OEM from the pick and pull along with the entire shift tower and then clean them up, replace bushing with SS bushing, and lube with powdered mica. Works much better. The aftermarket cables may be OK or might flex between the shift selector and the internal clamp and bend, just depends.

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

 Rate the quality of this post and help *OldNuc* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

05-01-2012, 08:44 PM #19

Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures

[simkid5614](#)
Advanced Member



Join Date: Jun 2007
Location: Florida
Posts: 614

2002 SL2

Had this issue months ago. Should've done a writeup myself. Gromment removal is a PITA i ended up cutting up my old one. then pulling cables out.

...

2002 SL2 115k "Whisper" No leaks!! :) 115 and going strong..

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

 Rate the quality of this post and help *simkid5614* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

 quote





05-01-2012, 08:58 PM

[Spaghettiohead](#)
Advanced Member

Join Date: Mar 2012
Location: Kingsville, TX
Posts: 502

1999 SC2

Re: How-To: removing shifter cables w pictures

Yeah the grommet looks like a PITA for sure, but my "helper" let me down on the engine removal and kinked one of the cables pretty bad; and the other one's boot is half gone anyway, so might as well change them out now.

I saw somebody wrote that a home vacuum with your hands cupped around one end is enough to pull the mica into the cable? Sounds like something I can manage to screw up, but I'll try LoL. Should I be lubing up both ends with mica, or is there a better way than the vacuum method?

REWARD EXCELLENCE!

 Rate the quality of this post and help *Spaghettiohead* reputation points. Click the reputation button near the bottom left corner of this message box. Thank you!

 quote





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[Zeebins](#)

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